

No Competition - Exodus 8:24-9:7

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Date: 24 November 2024

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning. You can turn your Bibles to Exodus chapter 8. We have gone through the plague of blood upon the Nile. We've gone through the plague of frogs. If you remember what happened to that God, he croaked, right? Went through the plague of lice. That was lousy. Now we're on the plague of flies and livestock. Hopefully we're going to do two today. We'll see what we get to.

So if you remember, as we looked at the sheet that I gave you, kind of looking at the way each plague dealt with one of the gods within Egypt, and then kind of the practice that was behind that, how God was judging the Egyptians and bringing to light what was really going on behind this God that they were worshiping. Last week we ended in verse 20, I think we got down through 23, because we wanted to talk about that word division. I'll put a division between my people and your people. Tomorrow shall this sign be, the Lord was saying to Pharaoh, through Moses, through Aaron, to Pharaoh. The word division means redemption. God is saying, I will put a redemption between my people and your people, Pharaoh. After three judgments, the number three, very telling, isn't it? After a judgment of three, redemption happens, and then we will not see again God's people brought under judgment. They are now forever out from judgment. They're separated out because of this redemption. God honors that redemption and that separation, and no longer will they fall under judgment. Just like for us, once we enter into redemption, we no longer fall under God's judgment, right? And so we will be looking at, we're going to back up a little into verse 21 of Exodus 8 to look at this plague of the flies. So the plague of blood, where blood was over the whole land, the water was turned to blood, the whole land was under blood, and the whole land was under judgment.

Pharaoh and Pharaoh's people did not respond to that in repentance and belief, so then rejecting bloodment, uh, bloodment, rejecting blood and judgment, they go further into corruption. The frogs were an outward sign of corruption, the lice being an unseen corruption, and now we get to the flies, flies being decay and death. The natural course, when we reject God's judgment of blood, we do not respond to that in repentance and belief, then there's a natural progression that happens. Um, so let's pick up in verse 21. So the Lord had said to Pharaoh to let his people go, and he said, through Moses and Moses to Aaron and Aaron to Pharaoh, um, he says, or else if you will not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon you and upon your servants and upon your house and into your houses. And the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies and also the ground whereon they are. It shall be full of swarms of flies. And that's the God, the Egyptian God, uh,

Kepri. I don't know if I'm saying that right. Um, it was a God who had the head of a fly and it was the God of creation. They believed. I mean, I don't know. I was thinking about it. If you walked into a church, right? And the people there like had like masks on, right? Or Halloween masks, one the head of a cow, one the head of a fly, one the head of a frog. Would you stay? No, I'd probably go. But it becomes so normalized that they would go somewhere where they would walk in and they would worship something that had the head of a fly. And this is another judgment that has to do with the land.

Um, that this judgment comes from the land and is regarding death and decay. There is no escaping the decay of corruption is there. That it will come upon the whole land. It'll be in your houses.

[3 : 45] It'll be everywhere. What may have started something very small. You can handle one fly. It's no big deal. A couple flies. But when flies are covering everything, it's another matter. And I will sever in that day, verse 22, in the land of Goshen. Remember, Goshen means, it's the land that means drawing near. So I will sever. I will make a distinguishing mark. I will separate out the land of Goshen, those that draw near, my people, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there. To the end that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. What is the reason that God is doing this? Is it just because he's angry at the Egyptians? He just wants to squash them like flies? No, so they may know that they may know that he is God in the earth. The reality of God is displayed through the mercy he shows his people. Because I am separating out my people from judgment so that you may know who I am. We see God's nature and God's character and God's heart through what? The mercy he shows his people. We can know there's a creator. It says that everyone is born with the knowledge of a creator. That God has put that knowledge within the heart of every man. But what's that creator like? How do I know what he's like? Does he love me? Is he rejecting me? Well, I know because of the mercy he's shown his people. The world knows our God through the mercy he showed us. And then we go out and share that with the world. The reality of God is displayed through the mercy he shows his people. And he said, now I'll put a division between my people and your people. Tomorrow shall this sign be. That's that word redemption there. I'll put a division. I'll put a signifying mark. The signifying mark of God, the thing that differentiates us between us and the world, is redemption. That God has placed that upon his people. It's what separates us from the world. God wanted Pharaoh to know there was something special about his people.

that even though they were in Egypt, they were still separate from Egypt, weren't they? Even though we're in this world, man, we're not of this world. There's something separate about us. 1 Peter 4, 17 says, For if the time has come, the judgment must begin at the house of God. And if it first begin with us, what shall the end of them that obey not the gospel of God be? So, whoa, I thought we weren't under judgment. I thought God's not judging us. It says it first begins with the house of God.

Yes. We want to be. You want to be under God's judgment by way of his mercy, right? We have been judged. We are under God's judgment of the cross. If you're out from under God's judgment, then all you're left with is his wrath, right? So for us, there's another scripture where Paul says that we have barely escaped. We have. We've barely been saved. It's nothing of ourselves. There's nothing we could have done. The only thing that saved us is Jesus. We got in because of his grace. Now, sure, his grace and his goodness is that big, but man, there is no other way but that one narrow way.

What will be the end of those that reject the gospel? What is the judgment they're under for Pharaoh and for Egypt? And that's as far as we got last time through that verse, through 23.

[6 : 54] And the Lord did so in verse 24, and there came a grievous swarm of flies. That word grievous means heavy. There was a lot of them. Into the house of Pharaoh and into his servants' houses, into all the land of Egypt, the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies.

How is Pharaoh going to react to this? Well, guess how he's going to react, right? He's going to continue to harden his heart. And we're going to see him kind of push back. And so the title for this section of scripture is no competition. This is kind of how I picture it, you know? Pharaoh thinking like, yeah, I'm going to stop the hand of God. God's hand is just still going to come through.

Pharaoh. This is no competition. This isn't like God's like, oh man, I hope this works. I hope I can get my people out of Egypt. I hope Pharaoh's not too strong for me. There's no competition here.

It's not because God is fighting against Pharaoh or because Pharaoh is some big strong guy or the gods of Egypt are somehow battling out the one true God. No, we read why. It's because God wants Egypt and his people to know that he is Lord in all the earth. And so the Lord did so. And there came a heavy swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh. God's word is constant, not only for God's people, for Moses, but also for Pharaoh, for all people. God's word isn't just constant in our lives.

It's not just true for us. It's not just that we live by God's word. The whole world lives by God's word. Now, like we said, it's whether they're under his mercy or under his wrath, under his judgment, but the whole world is also under the constancy of God's word. It's not just like, well, now that I've accepted God, the Bible applies to me. The Bible applies to all of humanity.

[8 : 39] And the swarm of flies came into the house of Pharaoh, his servants, and all the land of Egypt. You know, God is not a respecter of persons, is he? It wasn't just into Pharaoh's house. It wasn't just into the court, you know, the rulers, but it was into the servants' houses, into the lowest, into all the land of Egypt. And the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies. That word corrupted, you know, we've talked about that with the frogs being that outward visible form of corruption in someone's life. You know, okay, well, I put the frogs away. You know, they're just too much. I mean, one frog was okay. And it was two frogs, it was three frogs, then it was frogs at dinner, then it was frogs at night, frogs in the car. And it's like, okay, Lord, that's become an idol. Put the frogs away. But then there's that unseen corruption, but the lice, right? Nobody else could see it, but you knew it was there. There's that constant itch, just like, oh, this just, this is not a good thing in my life. God wants it out in my life. If you don't, like Egypt did not, then as we see here, the flies come, and flies are an indication of death and decay. The word corrupt means death, destroy, ruin, decay, and the ultimate end of corruption leads to death, doesn't it?

In Psalm 78, the psalmist is rehearsing the history of Israel, and he gets down in verse 43, and he begins to talk about what's happening here. It says, how God had wrought his signs in Egypt and his wonders in the field of Zoan. That's the, that, the word Zoan there means the field of letting go, or releasing. And it turned their rivers into blood and their floods that they could not drink.

And this is what he says here about the flies and the frogs. And he sent diverse sorts of flies among them, which devoured them. That means to suck their blood and to eat them. And frogs, which destroyed them. That's the same word we just read where the flies corrupted the land, destroyed it, ruined it, caused decay. If you remember the frogs, when they died, they had to burn them. The land stunk, corrupted the land. And here now are these flies that were biting flies, blood-sucking flies. You know, sin, sin's pleasurable for our season. We enter into sin and we think, hey, okay, it wasn't so bad.

You know, a little sin, it bites. Sin bites. But over time, sin will suck the life out of us a little at a time. One little fly, no big deal. You know, I don't mean to embarrass you. But Lily, the mosquitoes really like her. And I remember this one time when she was like, I don't know, 11 or 12, we were on a daddy-daughter date. We were going to go ride our bikes down this one trail. It was really cool. We like to do that. And I remember we were riding and the sun was slanting through the trees.

And just the way it hit, it kind of hit the glade we were riding through. I turn and look back and it like was shining down around her. And you could see a swarm of mosquitoes around her. None of them were around me, but it looked like she was in the midst of a swarm. And she kind of stopped and noticed it too. I just looked at her and I'm like, ride. And we just turned and rode back as quick as we could. And I don't know what we did the rest of the day. We didn't ride bikes. But I was like, man, it's like, if there's a mosquito, it's going to find her. You know, one mosquito, you know, it's not too bad. That's a pain. Two, three, a swarm, one fly, one sin, two sins, 10, 100.

[11 : 59] Sin will find us out. Numbers 32, 23 says, and be sure your sin will find you out. Your sin is not something that can be taken lightly. You know, the judgment that God was bringing upon Egypt, you think, was this harsh? Well, all God was doing was giving them what they wanted, right? God judged Egypt by simply giving them exactly what they wanted. They wanted to worship these things. Man, you want frogs? I'll give you frogs. You want to worship the flies? I'll give you them. God's judgment was just giving them what they wanted. When God judges sin, in a sense, he's just giving people what they want. He said, would you like redemption? I just, I still, it's hard to, when you say to someone, hey, would you, when you die, would you like to go to heaven? Would you like to have peace with God for all of eternity? Would you like to have your sins washed away and never feel guilt or shame and condemnation again and live in the glorious light of God for the rest of eternity? Yeah.

All right, well, you have to confess your sin and you have to put your faith in Jesus that he was the only way to forgive you of your sins. And then he's going to lead you away from those sins, out of darkness into light. Oh, I don't want that. I like my sin. I like my darkness. So I don't want that.

So God, all God's doing is just saying, that's what you want. I'll give it to you. Sin bites, sin devours, and sin destroys, and it sucks the life out of us a little at a time.

But who did not experience this plague? God's people, right? Only those under redemption could escape this corruption and decay. And Pharaoh called in verse 25 for Moses and for Aaron and said, go you, sacrifice to your God. All right, he's going to let him go. This worked. Go you and sacrifice to your God in the land. He says, hey, you know, let's compromise. You want to go worship your God? Go worship your God. Compromise always seeks to maintain control. Pharaoh's like, look, I'll compromise with you, but I still got control of this situation. Moses said, it is not meat for us to do so. It's not good for us to do that. Why? We shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God. What does that mean? They're going to take things that are abomination and sacrifice them? What is Egypt worshiping? Because they've rejected the creator, they worship the creature. They're worshiping the things that Moses and the Hebrews are going to go and sacrifice. To sacrifice a lamb, to sacrifice a goat. These things are sacred. That's an abomination to them. That which is pleasing to God will always be an abomination to the world. James 4.4 says, you adulterers and adulterers, this is, know you not that friendship of the world is enmity with God. Does that mean we're not friendly with the world? No, but you don't have that fellowship. You don't have a friendship with the world. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. The world will always see that which is pleasing to God as an abomination. And we can never expect an unreasonable world to be reasonable. Look what Moses says. That we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the

Lord our God. Lo, we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes. And what will they do? They'll kill us. To the world, death is reasonable. Proverbs 8.36 says, but he that sins against me, this is wisdom speaking, it's God speaking in the voice of wisdom. He that sins against me wrongs his own soul. All they that hate me love death. When we reject life, the only alternative is death. The world thinks death is reasonable. It's the most natural thing to do. Hey, it's unwanted?

[15 : 37] We'll kill it. What standard are we going by? Who decides what's wanted and what's not wanted? Is God creator? Oh no, I'm worshiping the creature now, more than the creator. It's my standard. I don't want it. Then I'll kill it. It's an abomination, he says. An abomination, something that's unclean or disgusting. We've referenced this verse quite a bit going through these plagues with Egypt, where Romans 1.25 says that they have changed the truth of God into a lie and worshiped and served the creature more than the creator. The purpose of creation is to glorify God and edify man. And when we reject the creator, we no longer understand the purpose of creation. If you reject the creator, you don't know what the purpose of this creation is anymore. Psalm 8 verses 6 through 9, speaking of man, it says, you have made him to have dominion over the works of your hands. You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the sea. Oh Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth? Does that sound like something bad? Does that sound like, oh, it's because man wants to destroy the environment, destroy the earth? That's a beautiful thing. God did that for our edification.

God put Adam in the garden and then filled it with all of good things for him to eat. God brought all the animals to him, said, hey, name these, Adam. This is to edify you and it's to glorify God. But when we reject the creator, we no longer understand the purpose of creation. For the Egyptians, a sacrifice was an abomination. For us, man, it's the hope that we have in Christ. Hebrews 9.22 says, and without the shedding of blood, there's no remission of sin. There's no undoing sin without the shedding of blood. So of course the enemy is going to try and get this world to turn away from that, to look at that as an abomination. God would never do that. That's child abuse. Maybe you've heard that said. God would put his son on a cross. He would never do that. I think what Jesus said when he said to the Pharisees, he said, man, you don't understand the scriptures or the power of God.

And that's all you have to answer someone like that. If they just want to argue or that's not true. You don't understand God. You don't understand his word. God has a reason for his creation.

Genesis 9.3 says, every moving thing that lives shall be what? Meat for you. Even as the green herb have I given you all things. This is when Noah gets off the ark and God says, hey, everything that's alive now, every animal I give to you for food. Do you know the world today is telling us that's not what creation is for? That that's an abomination to use what God has given us for edification?

In 1 Kings chapter 8, Solomon has just dedicated the temple. It's this glorious time. One of the longest prayers in scriptures is Solomon's prayer. You think I pray long. Solomon prays long when he's dedicating the temple. But he wasn't just praying. In 1 Kings 8, verse 62 through 63 says, and the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifice before the Lord. And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered unto the Lord 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep.

[19 : 00] So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord. Wow, that's extreme. I don't know about that. Is that right? Who are you, oh man, to question God, right? But when, like we talked about last week, why do we listen to the world's reasons? Why don't we say why? Why do we let the world decide what is science? What is health? What God's purpose is in creation? Now, all of these animals were sacrificed. It was like a huge barbecue at this time because all Israel was there dedicating the temple, and they would sacrifice them to God, and then they would eat them. You know, you can kind of say the Christianized version today, this side of the cross, we pray before our meal, and then we eat it. So it wasn't a waste or anything like that. But God has a purpose for his creation.

And when we reject the creator, we don't understand that purpose any longer. And compromise seeks to control what is only in God's control, right? It says, hey, Christian, hey, believer, we can compromise. But we're going to see what will happen. Verse 27, and Moses said, no, but we will go three days journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as he shall command us. Sorry, Pharaoh, you don't get to determine the method of worship.

Only God determines the method of his worship. For God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. And Moses says, and here we have the number three again, we're going to go three days in the wilderness to sacrifice. Three days is going to separate us between us and the world. Three days will separate between Egypt and God's people. Three days will separate between Egypt and the sacrifice. Jesus, when he was teaching his disciples in Mark chapter 9, verse 31, it says, for he taught his disciples and said unto them, the son of man is delivered into the hands of men and they shall kill him. And after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. Three days shall separate out God's people from this world.

See, Pharaoh was fine with a God he could control. He said, go ahead, go worship your God in the land. I can still control this. I'm fine with that. Verse 28, and Pharaoh said, I will let you go. You may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness. Okay, okay. If you need to go, fine. But don't go too far. Don't take it too far. Don't be too extreme about this. Only you shall not go very far. I'll compromise with you. Don't be too extreme. Hey, and you can compromise and help me. You can pray for me that this curse would go away. Control always seeks the last word, right? Compromise seeks to maintain control. And then who has to have the last word here? Okay, okay, okay. You can go sacrifice out there. But, but the further God's people are removing themselves from the world, the further the world realizes how far it is from God. That's why the world doesn't like to see us go very far. You know what? Stay close. Because if I see you going far from the world, if I see God's people moving away from the world, if you're being holy as I am holy and separating yourself, I realize how far I am from God. I don't like that feeling. So, hey, stay close. Let's compromise. And you know what? Pray for me. Let me come under that blessing. And then I won't feel so bad. I won't have to acknowledge the fact that I'm under God's judgment instead of under God's mercy.

Pharaoh, in essence, is saying, hey, don't be too extreme. Don't put too much distance. Just compromise. Pharaoh's idea of God is simply a reflection of himself. Compromise and appeasement. That's who Pharaoh is. And Moses, in verse 29, said, behold, I will go out from you, and I will entreat the Lord that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh and from his servants and from his people tomorrow.

[22 : 52] You see again, God is no respecter of persons in judgment, and God's no respecter of persons in mercy. As all come under that. God's deliverance knows no titles. Pharaoh doesn't matter if it's you, your servants, your people. Hey, but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully anymore in letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord tomorrow and his people tomorrow. Pharaoh would continue to defy God even to the prolonged suffering of his people. Pharaoh could have said, tomorrow, how about right now? You know what? Entreat God right now. But Pharaoh's defiance and hardness of his heart would continue to prolong the suffering on his people. In Romans 13, the Lord, through Paul, tells us what government is for and why God has established this system of civil government that we live under.

Romans 13, 1 says, let every soul be subject unto the higher powers or governors or rulers. For there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God. Okay, so Pharaoh is put there by God. We have to be subject to Pharaoh? Pharaoh said, throw your babies in the river.

Pharaoh is not letting the people go. Pharaoh is bringing this hardship on the people. Well, Romans 13, jump down to verse 3 and 4. For rulers are not a terror to good works but to evil, for he is the minister of God to you for good.

That was Pharaoh's calling and Pharaoh's position and Pharaoh's role. As the leader and the ruler of Egypt, God had placed him there. Why? He's a minister of God to you for good, to put down on righteousness and to promote righteousness.

If someone doesn't do that, if Pharaoh doesn't do that, or a leader doesn't do that, they are answerable to God and responsible for the charge that's been given them and the way they've discharged that. We are as well. We are responsible for our part, which is what? To be subject unto the higher powers. How do we do that? We do that based upon God's word. What are the higher powers here for?

[24 : 59] Hey, to promote righteousness and to put down sin. If they call evil good and good evil and flip the script, we are not subject unto the fact that they are derelict in their duties. We're still subject to God and to his word. As much as they want to abide by God's word, then we can abide by God's word together. If they don't abide by God's word, we still continue to abide by God's word.

And God's word, just a spoiler, doesn't preach revolution. God's word preaches humility. Our response is not to try and be God's judgment upon those who are not fulfilling their role that God's placed them in. Our response should be to fulfill our role that God has placed us in, right?

In Acts chapter 10, verses 34 and 35, Peter speaks of this idea that God is not a respecter of persons. It doesn't matter if you're up here, down here, or way down there, to this world. God sees us all in an even playing field. And Peter opened his mouth and said, of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that fears him and works righteousness is accepted with him. Even in Egypt, in every nation.

This is when the Holy Spirit has come upon the Gentiles. When Peter sees that, oh my word, salvation has come to the Gentiles as well. The gospel is not just for the Jews, that any nation, him that fears and works righteousness is accepted by God. Moses was not asking Pharaoh to agree with the truth, nor was he responsible for how Pharaoh would respond to the truth.

But Moses was responsible for himself to present an accurate picture of the truth. I'm not responsible for how someone responds to the truth, right? But I am responsible to paint an accurate picture of that truth. I'm also not asking someone to agree with me when we present the truth. I mean, I love you all, but if you don't agree with me, probably not going to change the way I study and preach the word, right? And you shouldn't either.

[27 : 00] We stand upon God's word. Paul tells Timothy, 1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 6, he says, if you put the brethren in remembrance of these things, what things? Well, all the things he's just told him about our walk in Christ. You should be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto that was attained. That's not that hard.

When we minister to one another, what are we doing? You're trying to figure out how to counsel someone? Now, what would I do in this situation? No, I'm just giving them God's word. I remember a story from when I was in Bible college, one of the pastors who was teaching us used to be an assistant pastor back in the day when the church we had just started, and he had just come on staff, and he was like, his first counseling session with someone, he was excited, and the person asked, you know, well, what do you think I should do about this situation? And he goes, I think, and then the pastor was just, his pastor was just walking by, and he leans his head in, and he goes, nobody cares what you think.

What does the word say? He's like, I think we should turn to the word. And you have to check yourself, like, well, what do I have? I have a life experience, but I'm not you. I don't have your, what you've gone through, what you've lived, and your family life. I don't have any of that, but what I do have is God's word. God's responsibility is to his word, not to man, and our responsibility is to God's word, and not to man. And God holds man to the same standard he holds himself, which is his word. And Moses went out from Pharaoh and entreated the Lord, and the Lord did according to the word of Moses. And he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. There remained not one. God's mercy is just as complete as his judgment. There is not one place that there was not flies all over the land of Egypt, and there's not one place that remained flies. God's mercy is just as complete as God's judgment.

And I like this part. We might have said this last week, where Pharaoh goes out, I mean, Moses goes out from Pharaoh before he prays. And you see there that Moses, he had a powerful ministry. His public ministry was powerful. Look at this guy. He's calling down plagues and things, and oh my word. But the source of that power was found in private. It was found when he was alone with God. He leaves Pharaoh, and he goes, and he prays to the Lord. It reminds me of where Jesus says in Matthew 6, speaking to his disciples. In verse 6, he says, But you, when you pray, enter into your closet. When you've shut the door, pray to your Father, which is in secret. And your Father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly. Does that mean we don't have corporate prayer? Does that mean if you have a really small closet, you've got to try and fit into it? No, that's not what it means. It just means a source. The source of our strength is not something visible or something public or something big. It's our Father. And we can pray to him just as effectively when we're alone as we can in a group. And so God here honors Moses' word because Moses has honored God's word.

And Pharaoh hardened his heart. Surprise. At this time, also. Neither would he let the people go. The word there where it says, he hardened his heart at this time. That word time is interesting.

[30 : 11] It means footfall or the stroke of an anvil. It doesn't mean like the passing of time so much. It's specifically talking about, and so at this time, at this moment, I think you see a picture here of Pharaoh's decisions. They were based on nothing more substantial than how he felt at that moment.

He's not looking down the road. He's not looking at what's happening to his people. He's not responding to what God is doing. He's living in the moment. At that moment, that strike of the anvil, that footfall, just one after another after another. Pharaoh's only looking at this world through temporal eyes.

Romans 8 verses 7 and 8 says, Pharaoh has placed himself in this position where he finds himself contrary, right, to God. But there's no competition. For us, we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

Because the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal, as we talked about last time. And for Pharaoh, once again, no amount of signs and wonders can change a heart, can it? What changes a heart? I mean, if this wasn't going to do it, what would?

Remember when Jesus tells the story of the rich man, Lazarus, and the, I'm sorry, the rich man and Lazarus, the beggar. And Lazarus dies and goes to Abraham's bosom, and the rich man dies, and he goes to Hades, to hell. And he says he's in torment. And he says he looked across and could see across the chasm, and he could see Abraham with Lazarus. And he said, oh, send Lazarus over just to give me some relief, just to put a cool drop of water on my tongue. And he said, I can't, there's this gulf.

[31 : 59] He said, all right, then send him back to tell my brothers that this is the reality of where they're going to end up, if they don't, turn to the Lord. And Abraham says, they have Moses, and they have the prophets. If they're not going to listen to them, they're not going to listen to Lazarus. In other words, the signs and wonders of someone rising from the dead, Jesus rose from the dead, but if you're not going to believe God's word, you're not going to believe the signs and wonders. No amount of signs and wonders will change a heart of the one who's already rejected God's word. When you reject God's word, signs and wonders are completely invalidated for you. For if thou refuse to let them go and will hold them still, well, then what? Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon your cattle, and that'll be the next plague. But I like this because it says, if thou refuse to let them go, he's unwilling to obey.

For Pharaoh, there's only two options. He can loosen his hand. The idea there of unwilling to let them go is he's holding on tight. He's holding on hard for his hard heart, or he can let them go.

Disobedience seeks to strong-arm God. When we disobey, we're essentially trying to strong-arm God into convincing him into accepting our disobedience. We're refusing his word, refusing the Holy Spirit's leading, and we're now trying to strong-arm God into what we want to happen. And for Pharaoh, the Lord says to him, Pharaoh, if you refuse to let them go, if you will hold them still, if you're holding so tight, Pharaoh, if you think you're going to win that competition, disobedience always seeks to strong-arm God, but God's always going to win that match. There's no contest. Pharaoh thinks he's going to force God's hand, but little does he know he's in God's hand, and he's part of his plan.

And so now we'll see the plague of cattle. That's the first one upon flesh. So we've done water, land, and now the fifth one is upon flesh. And that is the god Hathor, who had the head of a cow, and it was considered the mother goddess. Again, if your mom had the head of a cow, no, we won't go.

No. God is trying to move Pharaoh, but he just won't move. And so God brings this judgment on the cattle. And this is judgment upon, this is his judgment upon the worship of creation. The cow was very sacred. We see that today, like in India, in the Hindu culture. But it's not just the cow, it's all the animals that were in the field. It's all of those that kind of represented the strength of Egypt. Their strength was in their production in agriculture, again, through the irrigation from the Nile, and then through their livestock. This is where they found their strength.

[34 : 58] And they begin to worship it. The flesh always worships the creature, right? When we act in the flesh, we're essentially worshipping the creature instead of the creator. I'm putting strength, or my hope in my own strength, instead of God's. Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon your cattle, which is in the field, and upon your horses, upon your donkeys, upon your camels, and upon your oxen, and upon your sheep. Just in case you wondered who it all pertained to here. There shall be a grievous, if you're reading like I am in the King James, it says murrain. Just means a plague, or a disease shall be upon them. Again, that's that word heavy, grievous. The same thing when it was a heavy, the swarm of flies was heavy. It was only on the livestock in the field, though, if you look at what the word says there. Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon the cattle, which is in the field. In judgment, God leaves space for mercy, doesn't he? Because we're going to find out later the hail is going to come and then wipe out the rest of their livestock and cattle.

In judgment, God leaves space for mercy. Egypt looked at the benefits derived from creation as a reason to worship creation. They said, man, look at all the benefits we're getting from the Nile, from the cattle, from the donkeys, from the cows. Let's worship them instead of worshipping the Creator. But strength is never found in the creature. It's found in the Creator.

As Isaiah tells us, Where is our help? It's in the Creator, not in the creature.

Jeremiah 17, 5 Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, or his strength. Trust in the flesh of man for strength, and whose heart departs from the Lord.

Psalms 44, verse 3, speaking of when God brings Israel into their promised land, For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them, but thy right hand and thine arm, in the light of thy countenance, because you had a favor unto them.

[37 : 06] Strength is not found in flesh, it's not found in the creature, it's found in the Creator. And just like Egypt, when we begin to look to the creature for strength, well, we end up with this goofy concoction in the same way Egypt did, where they're worshipping something with the head of a cow, and everything's out of order.

And the Lord shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt, and there shall nothing die of all that is in the children of Israel. There's no misunderstanding the condition of God's judgment and mercy. God's very specific here, and there's no having to guess.

God is very specific in the conditions of his judgment and of his mercy. He said that he is going to make a distinguishing mark. He's going to sever between. And there will be none within the land of Israel that shall die.

Why? Because he made a redemption upon them, right? He separated them out. Redemption leaves no area untouched, and death is fully defeated by redemption. Isaiah 25, verse 8 says, He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord will wipe away all tears from off all faces.

And the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth, for the Lord has spoken it. All tears wiped away. He will take away the rebuke from the earth. Death is swallowed up in victory.

[38 : 23] All those under redemption have found death to be defeated. Revelation 20, 14, And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Even death will die. Redemption has a death for death, right? For us, death isn't death. What is it? It's just a doorway into life, right?

It's just a pathway to eternal life. And the Lord appointed a set time, saying, And tomorrow, if you notice, this is a theme. Ever since, Moses said to Pharaoh, Hey, I'm going to give you the honor of choosing when the plague should be lifted.

Pharaoh said, tomorrow. You know, I can tough it out. I like frogs in my soup. And now you see this theme where the Lord's like, All right, tomorrow. Tomorrow. But what is God doing here? He's giving space for mercy and repentance.

He's saying, Pharaoh, there's a space for you. It's going to be tomorrow. But Pharaoh, you could repent now. You could say, you know what, God? Show us mercy now. Take this away. I'll respond to you. God gives space for repentance, but that space will not last forever.

[39 : 28] In Revelation chapter 20, back over in Revelation, we see as the judgment has ended, the seven years tribulation is over. The thousand year reign is over.

At the end of all that, it says, I saw a great white throne and him that sat on it from whose face the earth and heaven fled away. And there's found no place for them, this temporary earth.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God and the books were opened. And another book was open, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works.

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, where was he cast? Man, he was cast the same place death was, into the lake of fire. Repentance, that space for repentance doesn't last forever.

You know, I hope we've all responded to God's space of repentance he's given us in our life. That space for mercy. That space where we can recognize we need to come under God's judgment to escape his wrath.

[40 : 29] Because only God's judgment of the cross brings us into his mercy, right? But that space won't last forever. It's appointed unto man once to die, and then the judgment.

Death in this life fixes our place in eternity. God gives us this life, this space for repentance and for mercy, to respond to his redemption through the cross.

In verse 6, I think we're just going through verse 7, yep. Love that.

Died not one. There's no more death once you've entered into redemption. God's word accomplished what it set out to do. And the Lord did that thing on the morrow.

All the cattle died, and all the cattle of the children of Israel did not die. God's word was specific. God's word was punctual. Did what he said he would do at the time he said he would do it.

[41 : 33] God's word divides, doesn't it? According to God's word, you had the Egyptians and you had God's people. And God's word deals in life and death. Over here death, and over here life.

God's word will always accomplish what it sets out to do. It's always specific, punctual. It divides, and it deals in death and in life. And so now Pharaoh sends. And behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead.

So he says to probably his magicians who, you know, they need something to do since their magic wands didn't work anymore. He says, hey, go find out if there's cattle that are still alive over there. Go find out if we've been separated out.

And I wonder if so many of his cattle had died, so many of the livestock, if he then took the Hebrews. Because later, like I said, when the hail comes, it's going to wipe out the rest of the livestock of the Egyptians.

Well, where'd they get that from? I guess they had some that wasn't in the field. But I picture him being like, well, hey, I'm going to take your livestock then. Romans 2.4 says, the goodness of God leads you to repentance.

[42 : 36] It's the goodness of God that leads a man to repentance. Pharaoh went and he saw God's goodness, didn't he? He saw God's goodness upon his people. The people that have been divided out said, wow, God is so good.

But Proverbs 29 verse 1 says, he that often being reprov'd hardens his neck shall suddenly be destroyed. And that without remedy. Man, Pharaoh is one who's being reprov'd and yet is hardening his heart, stiffening his neck time and time and time again.

So now when he sees God's deliverance, he doesn't see it as a reason for repentance. He sees God's deliverance and God's division as a reason to reject. He's like, I don't, I don't. God hates me.

God doesn't love me. So he's rejecting God because he doesn't see God's goodness anymore. Instead of seeing that God's goodness is a way for repentance, he sees it only as a reason to reject further.

Jesus speaks of this in Matthew 12 verse 30 when he says, he that is not with me is against me. And he that gathers not with me scatters abroad. It's only two places to be. He doesn't say he that's not with me.

[43 : 38] Well, right? Like we said, everybody is under God's word. God's word applies to every person. You're either with him or you're against him. And if we're not with him, what does he say?

He that gathers not scatters abroad. There's no other alternative. For Pharaoh not to be with God, he now sees the goodness of God as a reason to reject further. For you and I can be frustrating. Like, I just don't get it.

Why doesn't this person respond? They can, here's God's goodness in their life. And here's an example of God's goodness in the life of his people. But what you don't realize is because they've hardened their hearts, because they've rejected, and because they believe the lie instead of the truth, they only see God's goodness as a reason for further rejection.

God had already, little to Pharaoh's dismay, Pharaoh thinks he's arm wrestling God, right? But we see here that God had already sent his people out of Egypt.

He's already made the decree that, hey, they're going, Pharaoh. This isn't like, oh, I hope so. They are going. God had already sent his people out of Egypt.

[44 : 44] It was just too hard, because Pharaoh was too hard. It was just too hard for Pharaoh to see that. Israel was just sticking around long enough to say goodbye. They're already, they've already had their tickets written out.

They're already going. I mean, the first time that God said to them through Moses, I'm delivering you out of Egypt, it was a done deal. This isn't a competition. God is just having his people stick around long enough for him to show his mercy and for them to say goodbye.

For you and I, the battles in this world and in this flesh, why are they there? What are they here for? Why are we still here? Why do we still battle? Aren't we redeemed?

How come it still feels like at times I'm still arm wrestling with the world and with the flesh? The battles in this world and in this flesh are simply to show us where our strength truly lies.

It lies in redemption. It doesn't rely on us. It doesn't rely on the creature. It relies and lies in the creator. 2 Peter 1.4, Peter says, Wherefore are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust or through the desire of the flesh to be fulfilled.

[46 : 02] But we've escaped that. The battle is over. The victory is won. And our leaving is sure. We're just sticking around long enough to say goodbye.

That's it. Paul would write that we know that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus and shall present us with you.

You. This isn't just for Paul. This isn't just for apostles and disciples. It's not just for the super spiritual people. Anyone, God is no respecter as a person, can come under God's redemption.

And we can have the same promise that God gave through Paul to the Corinthians that he gives to us as the church. Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, Paul says, he's going to raise us up also.

But not only us. And shall present us with you. The battle's over. The victory is won. And our leaving is sure. We're simply sticking around long enough to say goodbye. That's it.

[47 : 06] It's not a question of if we're going to make it. We already know that because of redemption. God's already separated us out. We're not under judgment and we're not under death. We're just here long enough for God to show through us to the world that he is Lord.

2 Corinthians 4.17 says, For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Why?

Why are we still under this struggle? Why the battle with the flesh? Why do I feel like I'm constantly having to fight against what God tells me he's already had victory over? Because that affliction is working something eternal in our lives.

We talked about that Wednesday night with Revelation, right? We looked at Smyrna and suffering. The suffering is necessary because of the eternal fruit it produces. Because of the fruit of the spirit that it produces. God doesn't want us, like Egypt, falling into the same trap where we're looking to the creature for strength, where we're looking to the creature to find out what our purpose is.

Looking to creation. What's my purpose? We need to look to the creator, right? He doesn't want us relying on the flesh. So how does he keep us from doing that? By constantly showing us our weakness and his strength in light of that.

[48 : 21] Father, thank you so much. Lord, as we come to you this morning and we've read your word, and Lord, we're so thankful that it's not just for the apostles. It's not just for those in the Bible.

It's not just for leaders in the church. But we too shall be raised up with Jesus. We shall be presented as the redeemed. And Lord, as we go through this section in your word, as we look through the plagues in Egypt, again, I just can't help every time noticing, the main characters, in a sense, they're not even a part of this.

They're just there. You're doing all the work on their behalf. Your people, the Hebrews, the reason you've come down to deliver, the reason you've sent Moses, the reason you're bringing these plagues against Egypt is because you're delivering your people.

And as we've just read, what your word said is they're already delivered. This is just the process of walking it out. And yet, Lord, look how little their involvement is. All they need to do is just stay in the land of Goshen.

Stay in the land of drawing near. Abide in Christ. You'll do all the work. Thank you, Lord, for separating us out unto redemption. Thank you that we do know the purpose of creation because we know our creator.

[49 : 38] Thank you, Lord, that our strength and our hope, Lord, is not in flesh. I think that song we sang in the beginning was so perfect. But, Lord, our hope is in you. Our strength is in you.

Lord, I pray that you would allow us to understand in our moments of weakness and in our struggles what the purpose is, Lord. That we would look past what's happening in our lives. We'd look past the quote-unquote plagues that seem to be coming against us, Lord, and realize that the plague of sin and of death has been taken away.

And that, Lord, all you're doing now is preparing us for an eternity and using us to share that eternity with other people. Thank you, Lord.

We bless your name. And in Jesus' name, amen. You know, even though Israel was not under God's judgment, they were still under bondage, weren't they?

They were still in Egypt. They were still slaves. And we can feel like, well, God, if I'm redeemed, I'm not under your bondage, I'm not under your judgment. Why do I still suffer in this? I was thinking of Paul when Paul would write about a time when he had great trial.

[50 : 46] And he prayed the Lord would take it away. And God's response was, no, Paul, my grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Why does God allow weakness in our lives?

So that he can display his strength. We're not under his judgment. We're under blessing, right? May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace. God bless you.